

Present Instructions

178 pages

* T.

What are you reading when I come in, dear Mrs. Somers?
I am afraid I disturbed you.
Mrs. Child; you know I am always glad to have you;
and when disturbing me, they, you know, there are
friendships so close that the presence of another is
as check upon communism. I was reading
my old friend, my wise friend, 'Trench', whose
unpartial clear counsels have helped me over many
a bad place in my life. Ah! I see, you don't
recognise 'Trench' as you would 'Longfellow'
or 'Sam' 'Coleridge'; suppose I should have said
the poems of archbishop Trench?

I did not know he had written any poetry, I know
- I mean, I have looked into his 'Parables', &
'Miracles'; father has them, you know, on his
'Divinity Shelf'.

Yes, I know; there are more than look into them,
but - valuable works as they are, I am not prepared
to write them on my list - ^{'particulars'} ~~of closest~~, most helpful
friends. But here - between these peer over --
how I wish, Jessie, I could make my friend
over to you! But you are too young. How
could I expect a girl to care for the ripeness
of wisdom, the broad deep experience, the
gentlemanly liberality of one, with as well
great uprightness - as well as framed
as strong as an old woman like me!"

"Do you know, Mrs. ~~Longfellow~~ I think you are
making just a very little mistake?"

"Really?" and Mrs. Somers repeated briefly

With a long look into the blushing countenance & smiling eyes of her young friend. "And when does my sweet mentor think I am wrong?"

"Am I being pert? Please, don't mind! But don't you know that it is for these things I have given every bit of my heart to you, & care for you lots more now than for any girl friend I ever had?" And Jessie ~~had~~ snatched too swift a kiss to give the white fingers time to move, laid her flowing hair on her friend's shoulder.

"How good you are to me, child! & I need not say, how dear! Cela va sans dire. But is it really true that you young things care so much about wisdom & experience?"

"Oh don't you see, Mrs. Somers, how ignorant & foolish we feel! Of course we know quite well that we don't know anything, except that other people may not be up to us, we carry things off with a high hand, & make believe to believe in ourselves! But that's a great deadly secret: don't tell any one in the world, or where should we poor girls be?"

"Not I, & to reward you, I'll tell you a secret: when you dear girls come to us, we old people have to make believe very much! like the marchioness & the orange-peel wine, for if we didn't pretend to think you as wise as the Queen of Sheba at least, we should never get you foolish bairns to have any confidence in yourselves at all. There now, we're quits!"

A clear ringing laugh from Jessie, then -

"Oh, if this is not delicious! Come just hunting

229

just hunting each other all round, each thinks
the other doesn't! But now for 'Lunch'; do you
think I may venture to be so intimate until I
know him better? Well, what do you want me to do
is to introduce me to him. I can always
find my way about - in a book somewhat
better, than somebody who knows the road
better, than me for the first-time. It's a compensation of
youthful ignorance, but - do you know I shall
have to open a book with 'Unexplored' on the back,
I mean, when I don't know anything about the
author or his works!"

"So do I, + I don't think it's ignorance at all,
as you might get into very treacherous country, or
into a slough!"

"Oh, but that is not all. Well the country was so lonely
I should want some one to show me the best points
of view; I should care for them after so promptly,
you know, + often come about, but - I suppose
I'm not clever enough to find them out the
first-time for myself."

Mrs. Somers paused for a minute or two: she was
really debating with herself whether she should tell
the girl's tempting offer stead her through come
by paths of literature dear to herself: the broad highway
yester ~~know~~ was familiar with. That is, you
did not know, as knew about most - your
first books - you had she not just left school? -
And, somehow, to know about a thing later no
edge of curiosities; you don't want to know any
more. The prospect was enticing: but - would it
be to set that bright young intelligent to share in

in her literary pleasures! But then, would a critic
be good for you?

"Well, dear, we'll try; I'll lead you about in the
pages of my old, much-used friends; but if I don't
find that my finding causes you to explore for
yourself, why, 'niver no more', that's all."

"~~That will be kind~~; + I'm nearly sure I shall want
to know more for being ~~right~~ ^{right} now. But, please,
don't begin at the beginning, & don't tell me
a great deal about the poems first; that's all
that they used to do at school + I never could
remember."

"Very well, I shall begin just here - with the verse
I happened to be reading when you came in. (Reads.
"on a Lady Lying"): Now, you see at once that
my poet is not a poet of the first water. Shakespeare
would have given you the whole in a single stanza.
Wordsworth's poem ^{might} have been as long, but
it would be ~~lengthened~~ ^{clipped} sometimes long drawn out,
a chain, cut - with gaps. But it is not so
much as a poet, ^{but} as a teacher, ^{that} the author meets
& wants in me!"

"But don't you like those lines -

"Yet prove is her of man's unquenched desire
that the procession of their lives might be
more equitable, majestic, pure & free;"

Sometimes they make plain to me what I never
quite caught before - they I can connect to
listen to the best birds of music - it somehow
gives a voice to all the desires in my heart about
my own life - & that's just what those lines say. I always
think it is poetry when some one has put into
words what you never could express so simply. Am I

right?"

"I copied that, & I believe you have hit on the best lines in the poem. Did you notice these? —

"In these high raptures there is nothing care,
Nothing which we can rest on to sustain
The spirit long, or arm it to endure
Against temptation, weariness, or pain?"

"Yes, I noticed them the more because the writer had just been saying such beautiful things about the lady's voice. I should not have liked ^{the lines} if they stood alone. I wish that just such people think now, that if we can give working people 'high raptures' — music & painting & nice things about them — we shall be making them really happy & good? I have thought often that I should like that best, but it's too silly!"

"You have thought — that you would like to spend your life in beautifying ^{now} of girls like yourself who live in a cordial way? I'm not sure that you could do better. Only bear one caution in mind: — Has the most glorious concert you ever heard made you better the next day, more earnest — a able to live a good day?"

"I'm afraid not, but isn't that my fault?"

"I doubt it; these ^{in their young days} delights are very pleasant — ~~but they last~~, & it is a duty to spread them as widely as we can; but we must remember all the time that it is not by these things men live. Paul, to you with our best:

"It is his sonnets which delight me most. Sometimes, the whole is a poem but almost always there is at least one poem like couplet as full of truth & wisdom as of beauty: listen to this: —

"Our rapture may to ^{these} unbidden words

• The mearest prints that on a cottage wall - to
see that he should care for nothing but the works of
books might master, because time ^{wore} for art should
make him reverence the rudest attempt
"To win the beauty that is floating round
Into abiding forms of grace & power."

"Thank you; that is a lesson! You will think me
very mean, but do you know I'm sometimes
afraid to admire a picture until I know ^{how} big
person was painted it? And as for tears over the
Scriptor prints in cottages! - I'm afraid I laugh!
But not a beautiful sensation ~~ever~~ ^{ever} greater
than this shows. And the last two - I don't
see how Chatterton himself could have said it
better, & I'm sure Wordsworth could not."

• Perhaps not? the first line reminds me a
little of Wordsworth but I don't remember any line
of his that is ~~so~~ ^{truly} ~~scarcely~~ hit off the musician part.
But ~~forget~~ - you see his sensitive nature - his
power of feeling beauty in common things. Here is
an instance -
"How thick the wild flowers blow about our feet; -
How poor things by unheeded; but if a person a
father or a gage into its beauty -
Then if thou cannot say
It wet with bankrupt tears into thy bosom, well!"

• Oh, do you know, I have often felt that! The wood-
anemone & the lesser celandine always make
me cry. That is, if I just pick one & look into it.
- don't think me a baby. - kiss it!"

"dear girl! Now, how I wish I could make you feel
the charmed pity of the poet; - so simple & sweet -
holiness on the market- place and in the cloister! -
Here is one example, in the former beginning.
"If sorrow come not near us; sending that,
"That we may use - even grief again as over
With the meest Son of our declining loves!"

How beautiful!" cried Jessie, with eyes upturned, "it
is worth while to have written a book of only 5 hours
said those two last words. I shall never forget them.
Then, looking up very shyly - I daresay you older people
think we girls have no sorrows, but you don't know how
dreadfully things hurt! I'm sure every streak my
nest & peat-deal offends them further."

"I know it's true, dear; & Mrs. Somers stroked the
right young head very tenderly: "You young boys
are all over sensitive places - the least ungentle
touch will make you wince. You suffer far more
readily, now or ~~longer~~ ^{ever} older, people. Well, but then,
child, you boys are far more tender minded. So all
the young men rejoice in his youth!"

"Thank you for understanding! And that's why
I like your poet, - dear Mrs. Somers - he quietes the joy,
& comforts the sadness!"

"And that's why I like him! For the joy, listen to this,
to his child -

"Joy gladness makes me thankful every way,
With this most-helpful ending, -

"Joy is of God, but - happiness & care,

Of our own hearts ~~which~~ ^{has} bestowed them."

"But how are you to ^{help} things that make you un-
happy from 'bestowing them'?"

"He has an answer for that, too; one of the most
glorious of the poems - *Embrace*, as it breathes
of Christian experience: -

"Lord, what a change within us our short hours
Spent in thy presence will prevail to make, -

"Why should we do ourselves this wrong,
that is, shrink even weak or weary, like
Anchors or ~~tumbled~~, when with us is prayer
And joy, seeking to ~~concupiscence~~ with Thee?"

"Oh! I shall learn that, say it - a score, then I

an - miserable! Don't laugh, indeed I am sometimes;
mostly seems in not a bit good or nice or anything
any one could like if they could see into me!"

"Ross friend! Does this express it? -

"Lord, many times I am very quiet -
Of mind over self, my sin, my sin -

Or, suddenly rather here Hobbes -

"for what is Heaven for once its secret light
Lent to some pestilent egg, dissolving all
The roads lead thoughts, that in our dreams insight
Wanders at large, nor heed loves faints thereof!"

"How wonderful it is that poets should know over
the secret - thoughts we never tell to any one!"

"Ah, my dear, hardly so wonderful as you think!
You young ones think that all the things sayings,
hips endeavours & miserable failures are the secret
histories of your hearts alone; we elders know
not - our world - & our best - is common to all
human hearts - only this, some harbors the good
reject the bad; others, harbors the bad & call it
the good. There, too, we, ^{elders} rating ourselves, have
learned to say with French -

"Take then my part - against myself, and then
in that - just keto."

Or, with Hobbes, -

" - the Lord who dwells on high

Knows all, yet loves us better than he knows."

"Oh dear! life is expunging! And indeed it is
a wonder that God can ~~see~~ or us!"

"Something has gone wrong with my bright young
face today! But tomorrow we will forget - all
these dark thoughts. Mean time, let us think
about - something else. Least - you notice
how our past - behavior - meets himself the ^{evening} ~~evening~~.

child. & seems to have made a great fight with no
pride that begets all pride; & to keep a lonely child's
heart in his high place was indeed a work of grace. Listen
to this, —

“ If that in sight of god is great —
Which counts itself so small,
With that low humility
The highest-great must call,
Which being such, not knows truly
To be a great at all. ”

“ And I am so proud! ”
“ Will this do? ”

“ Then we have quailed to chasten & restrain
Our wandering thoughts, —
& indulge in delightful day-dreams, “ ourselves the centre”
To wake up with “ Scorn & sick disdain ” to the every-day
duties, —

“ Then in the world of pleasure is there spell
So mighty as at times like these to bind
Ourselves sitting by Samaria's well,
Or teaching some poor fishers on the shore? ”

“ O. Aunt you! that will help me keep my thoughts
in order. “ sitting by Samaria's well? He was content —
Spent himself upon me. But I thought — it was only
Foolish girls who built castles in the air! It is worth
while to — chasten & restrain our thoughts when you
know wise people have the same battles to fight. But —
why don't you read? —

“ You cannot not & say else by accident, —
To or cannot know & am so glad of? ”

“ Because I thought you would be sure to know it. You
must read “ greater Masterpiece. ” There is much in it that
you will tell has come out of your own experience: a
some lovely lines: —

“ The beauty of the universe
Was lying in me like a curse;
Only the lone eagle at my feet —
Uttered a soothing murmur sweet, — as

As every broken, every wave
Sank gently to a quiet green,
Dying on the bosom of the sea.

The cadence reminds you of those significant lines in the
"Whit Dot," you remember, —

"And right across the verdant land
Towards the very home of God,
comes gliding in with lonely gleam,
comes gliding in serene & slow,
left a silent as a dream
A solitary dot!"

Read me "The Monk & the Bird!"

"Oh. don't you like Longfellow's version much better?
The 'bott about' — 'all about'
The broad, sweet sunshine lay without
Filling the summer air; — & come; it's
delicious!"

"Yes. Longfellow catches the poetry of the situation
— & French — prose! Do you think he would say
'Save me from my friends'? All the same, he
has this quality of true poet — he gives you clear
glasses to look through, & his glass is a window
through which you see many things. Too many for
less poet — offer a painted window, rich & beautiful
inside, & casting rich reflections without, but —
giving out more than rainbow hints of the
unseen without."

"That I think I know what you mean: there are
really beautiful verses which only give us a sense
of ~~the~~ things delightful but no clear thoughts. What
a delicious taste we have had! And will you
lend me your French? I want to read every
line & print out new things for myself. I want to copy
some of the poems, & to say when this 'naughty'

Charlotte M. Brown
(author of New Edition.)